## Linden Hills Small Area Plan

This past year saw turmoil in our neighborhood centered around a particular development project. At the time, I said that there was a rent in the fabric of Linden Hills, a tear that would take months and years to heal. One step in the process will be to come together as neighbors in order to craft a common vision about the future of commercial development in our neighborhood. To that end, the neighborhood, City staff and I are embarking on a planning process for the neighborhood that is described in more full detail below.

My expectation is that this process will be as wide open as possible. Indeed, to recommend a plan to my colleagues for acceptance the process will need to have been open, welcoming, cooperative, and inclusive. This means that everyone in the neighborhood is warmly included in the process. That people on all sides of the Linden Corner issue are invited to participate. That people on all sides of the issue do participate. And that the input of all parties is respected and included.

This process, if it meets the expectations above, will not only yield a development plan that is credible and that brings value to the city's planning efforts but will also begin to repair the fabric of the neighborhood. Working together, we can create a true win-win for the neighborhood and the city. I look forward to working with you to create Linden Hills' future.

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## Background

Development pressures in Linden Hills have been increasing over the last few years. From the closing of Almsted's to the relocation of the Linden Hills Co-op to the highly contentious Linden Corner development proposal, it has become clear that Linden Hills faces an evolving and dynamic commercial real estate market. At the same time, the discussion surrounding these changes has made it clear that there is a lack of clarity and consensus in the neighborhood about what we want our business nodes to look like in twenty years. When other places around Minneapolis have been faced with similar challenges, the City has successfully used a small area planning (SAP) process to forge goals, draft policies, and – if necessary – refine zoning classifications in order to shape a more refined vision for the future for a particular place. Once it is adopted by the City Council, a small area plan sets up far greater guidance for decision-making because it contains more detail and nuance than is possible in the city-wide Zoning Code alone.

LHiNC, in cooperation with City of Minneapolis Planning staff and the Ward 13 City Council office, has agreed to coordinate a productive and open Small Area Plan process for the 43<sup>rd</sup>/Upton and 44<sup>th</sup>/France nodes, along with the 44<sup>th</sup> St. commercial corridor which connects them. While details of the mechanics of the community engagement process are not yet finalized, all are committed to ensuring everyone who wants to have her/his voice heard is welcomed into the conversation.

In order to allow for a productive community conversation during the creation of the Linden Hills SAP, the City has put a narrow interim development moratorium in place. The moratorium will prohibit approval of land-use applications requesting 1) height above that allowed by the zoning code or 2) a floor-area-ratio (FAR) above 1.7 (the FAR allowed in C1 zones). While the interim moratorium is in effect immediately following its passage on March 30<sup>th</sup>, a public hearing will be held May 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Zoning and Planning Committee to gather input on the full moratorium.

The Ward 13 Council office, in cooperation with LHiNC, will continue to update the community as the Small Area Plan process is created and begins in earnest this summer. Below are answers to some common questions about the process, and interested folks are encouraged to contact my office for more information.

## Frequently Asked Questions

What is the process for creating a Small Area Plan?

Each Small Area Plan process is different, but most share some basic components. The first step is creation of a Project Steering Committee, representing stakeholders, to establish the scope of work, timeline, process, and a community engagement plan. A Steering Committee has not yet been established for the Linden Hills SAP.

What is the Comprehensive Plan?

Minnesota state statute gives municipalities the authority (and in fact requires them) to develop a comprehensive plan and to implement that plan through zoning regulations and other local controls. A comprehensive plan is a compilation of policy statements, goals, standards, and maps for guiding the physical, social and economic development, both private and public, of a municipality. Besides policy statements, goals and standards, the document should also contain (but not be limited to) a land use plan, proposed densities for development, a community facilities plan, a transportation plan and recommendations for plan implementation.

What is a Small Area Plan?

A Small Area Plan can take many forms but is intended to provide more locally-driven and locally-focused policy than can be achieved in the city-wide Comprehensive Plan. More depth can be found in the City's Neighborhood Guide for Developing Planning Documents.

How long will the process take?

The timeline can vary depending on the scope of work or unforeseen obstacles, but SAPs can be expected to take between 12-14 months from pre-planning stages to adoption by the City Council.

What is the Linden Hills Neighborhood Council's role?

The Small Area Plan will be created through a cooperative process involving the neighborhood, City Council Member, and City staff. A Project Steering Committee will be created to develop and manage the Small Area Planning process. The Project Steering Committee will need to be inclusive of a full range of community stakeholders and viewpoints.

When do I get to be involved?

LHiNC will create a process to solicit volunteers for the Steering Committee. Members of the project Steering Committee will be expected to make a commitment to serve on the project throughout its duration and to represent the points of view put forth in the community process. Interested residents who are not selected to serve on the Steering Committee will be welcome and encouraged to participate in opportunities for community input as part of the process the Steering Committee will create.

What is the Ward 13 City Council member's role?

A Small Area Plan is a community-driven process. The document created through the process must have widespread community buy-in if it is to be adopted into the City's Comprehensive Plan. The Council Member's role is to work with the neighborhood, Steering Committee, City staff, and residents to ensure that the process engages all stakeholders and that there is consensus to the extent possible.

What is City staff's role?

The City's Planning staff is responsible for maintaining the City's Comprehensive Plan. They will work with the Steering Committee to ensure that the Small Area Plan created is compatible with the Comprehensive Plan. The City employs sector planners to assist in planning efforts like this. The City is currently in the process of hiring a sector planner for Southwest Minneapolis. The central work of the Small Area Plan will be able to begin in earnest once a planner is hired this summer.

## June, 2012 Update

At it's June board meeting, LHiNC established a process to select members to serve on the Steering Committee. The Committee will comprise 15 members and 3 alternates, in addition to three LHiNC Board members, for a total membership of 18. Board member review of the 27 applicants to fill the 15 open seats and three alternate seats will be conducted during June in anticipation of a recommendation being presented at LHiNC's July 10<sup>th</sup> board meeting.